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> December 2023

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Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation, Australia

Selected quarterly indicators on factors that influence how people participate in the labour market and the hours they work

Reference period December 2023

Released 8/05/2024

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Key statistics

In December quarter 2023:

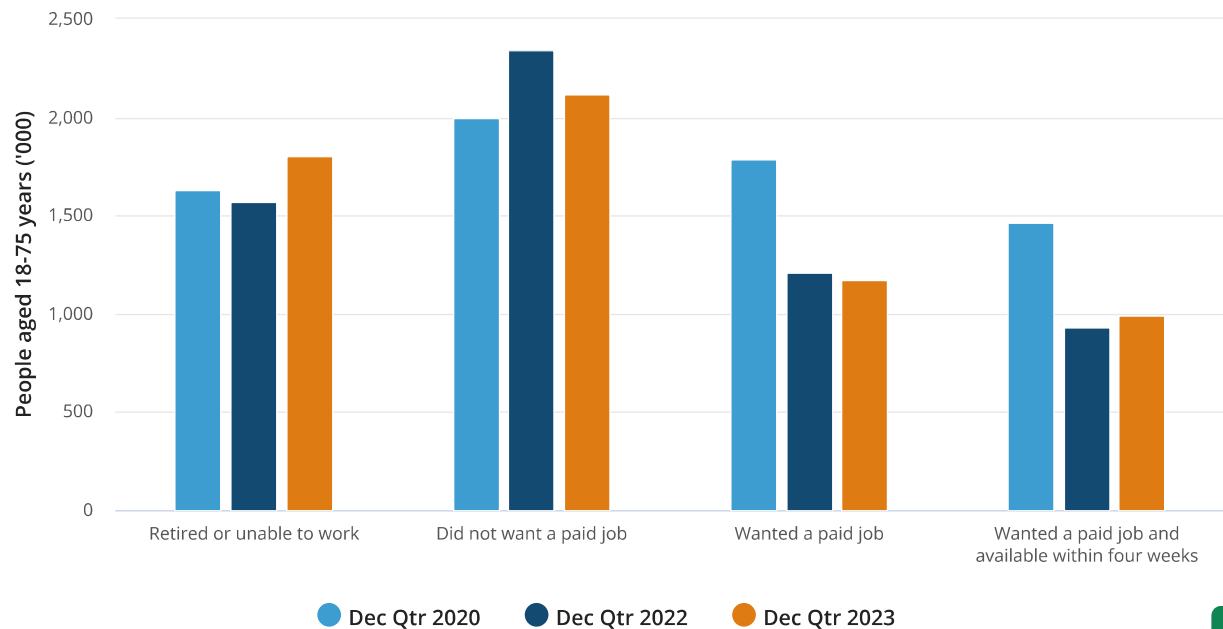
- The most common reason women were unavailable to start a job or work more hours within four weeks was 'Caring for children', while for men it was 'Long-term health condition or disability'.
- The most important incentives for people to seek a job or more hours were the "ability to work part-time hours" and "finding a job that matches skills and experience."

This publication is a quarterly release. Refer to [Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation, Australia Financial year 2022-23 \(https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/barriers-and-incentives-labour-force-participation-australia/2022-23\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/barriers-and-incentives-labour-force-participation-australia/2022-23) for the latest financial year data.

In December quarter 2023, there were 19 million people aged 18-75 years. Of these:

- 13.9 million were employed or had a job to start or return to (73%).
- 1.8 million were retired or permanently unable to work (9%).
- 3.3 million did not have a job (17%).

Graph 1 - People who did not have a job



The ABS advises caution when interpreting quarterly estimates from the Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation survey as the survey sample was originally designed to produce high quality annual output. From January 2023, the ABS has increased the sample and estimates for March quarter 2023 onwards are on the increased sample.

Feedback

Wanting to work

Of the 3.3 million people who did not have a job in December quarter 2023, 1.2 million people wanted a paid job (36%) and 2.1 million people did not want a job (64%).

- For men and women aged 18-24 years, the main reason for not wanting to work was 'Studying or returning to studies' (63%).
- For women aged 25-39 years, the main reason was 'Caring for children' (54%).
- For men aged 25-39 years, the main reason was 'Long-term health condition or disability' (39%).
- For women aged 40-54 years, the main reason was 'Caring for children' (24%).
- For men aged 40-54 years, the main reason was 'Long-term health condition or disability' (72%).

In December quarter 2023, of those aged 18-75 years who did not have a job, were not retired and not permanently unable to work:

- 2.0 million people had long term health conditions, and 634,400 wanted a paid job (31%).
- 1.3 million people had disability, and 402,700 wanted a paid job (31%).

Whether a person has disability has been derived from a subset of questions from the ABS Short Disability Module. These questions are not designed to estimate prevalence but rather allow for the broad comparison of the characteristics of people with and without disability. For more information, refer to the [Glossary \(/methodologies/barriers-and-incentives-labour-force-participation-australia-methodology/2022-23#glossary\)](#) in [Methodology \(/methodologies/barriers-and-incentives-labour-force-participation-australia-methodology/2022-23\)](#).

People can have both long-term health conditions and disabilities. For people with long-term health conditions, about 50% also have disability. For people with disability, about 90% also have long-term health conditions. This survey does not establish if there is a relationship between a person's long-term health conditions and their disability.

Available to work

Of the 1.2 million people who wanted a paid job in December quarter 2023, 1 million were available within four weeks (85%) and 174,900 were not available within four weeks (15%).

The main reasons women were not available to work were:

- Caring for children (46%).
- Short-term illness or injury (16%).
- Long-term health condition or disability (5%).

The main reasons men were not available to work were:

- Long-term health condition or disability (48%).
- Caring for children (6%).

Incentives

Of the 3.3 million people who did not have a job in December quarter 2023, the most important incentive to encourage them into the labour force was 'Finding a job that matches skills and experience', which was rated as 'Very important' by 32% of people without a job.

- For men and women aged 18-24 years, the most important incentive was the 'Finding a job that matches skills and experience' (47% rated as 'Very important'), followed by 'Access to a mentor or someone to offer support in the workplace' (44%).
- For women aged 25-39 years, the most important incentives were 'Financial assistance with childcare costs' and 'Ability to work part-time hours' (both 55%), followed by 'Working a set number of hours on set days' (54%) and 'Access to childcare' (52%).
- For men aged 25-39 years, the most important incentive was 'Finding a job that matches skills and experience' (43%), followed by 'Ability to vary start or finish times' (33%).
- For women aged 40-54 years, the most important incentives were 'Ability to work part-time hours' (41%) followed by 'Finding a job that matches skills and experience' (40%) and 'Support for training or study to improve skills' (36%).
- For men aged 40-54 years, the most important incentive was 'Ability to vary start or finish times' (31%), followed by 'Working a set number of hours on set days' (30%).
- For people with long-term health conditions, the most important incentive was 'Ability to work part-time hours' (28%).

- For people with disability, the most important incentive was 'Finding a job that matches skills and experience' (28%).

Note: An issue was detected in the 2023-24 collection which resulted in incomplete incentives data for people who did not want to work. This issue only relates to 2023-24 data and does not affect other data for this population group or data for other groups. For the December quarter 2023, this issue has been addressed using imputation based on December quarter 2022 data. The ABS will review this imputation approach when December quarter 2024 data becomes available.

Data downloads

Tables - Quarterly measures

Download all (31.91 MB)

Table Q1. Participation status

Download XLSX
[1.68 MB]

Table Q2. Whether wanted a job or more hours

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Table Q3. Unavailable workers and job seekers

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Table Q4. Reasons not looking for work or more hours

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Table Q5. Difficulties finding work or more hours

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[4.03 MB]

Table Q6. Reasons not wanting to work or work more hours

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Table Q7. Incentives to participate

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[3.02 MB]

Feedback

Related publications

Information related to barriers and incentives is also available in:

- [Participation, Job Search and Mobility \(/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/participation-job-search-and-mobility-australia\)](#). (6226.0), 2015-2023.
 - [Potential workers \(/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/potential-workers/latest-release\)](#) (6228.0).
 - [Underemployed workers \(/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/underemployed-workers/latest-release\)](#) (6229.0).
- [Disability, Ageing and Carers \(/statistics/health/disability/disability-ageing-and-carers-australia-summary-findings\)](#) (4430.0), 1981-2018.
- [Pregnancy and Employment Transitions \(https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/second+level+view?\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/second+level+view?)

[ReadForm&prodno=4913.0&viewtitle=Pregnancy%20and%20Employment%20Transitions,%20Australia~Nov%202017~Latest~29/06/2018&&tabname=Past%20Future%20Issues&prodno=4913.0&issue=Nov%202017&num=&view=&\)\(4913.0\), 2005-2017.](#)

- [Persons Not In the Labour Force, Underemployed Workers and Job Search Experience \(https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/ProductsbyCatalogue/BBB46A2E9C441282CA257DF40079A913?OpenDocument\) \(6226.0.55.001\), 2014.](#)
- [Persons Not In the Labour Force \(https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/second+level+view?ReadForm&prodno=6220.0&viewtitle=Persons%20Not%20in%20the%20Labour%20Force,%20Australia~September%202013~Latest~26/03/2014&&tabname=Past%20Future%20Issues&prodno=6220.0&issue=September%202013&num=&view=&\)\(6220.0\), 1975-2013.](#)
- [Job Search Experience \(https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/second+level+view?ReadForm&prodno=6222.0&viewtitle=Job%20Search%20Experience,%20Australia~July%202013~Latest~05/02/2014&&tabname=Past%20Future%20Issues&prodno=6222.0&issue=July%202013&num=&view=&\)\(6222.0\), 1976-2013.](#)
- [Underemployed Workers \(https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/second+level+view?ReadForm&prodno=6265.0&viewtitle=Underemployed%20Workers,%20Australia~September%202013~Latest~26/02/2014&&tabname=Past%20Future%20Issues&prodno=6265.0&issue=September%202013&num=&view=&\)\(6265.0\), 1985-2013.](#)
- [Australian Social Trends - Disability and Work \(https://archive.org/details/41020-2012-03/page/16/mode/2up\) \(4102.0\), Mar 2012.](#)
- [Successful and Unsuccessful Job Search Experience \(https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/second+level+view?ReadForm&prodno=6245.0&viewtitle=Successful%20and%20Unsuccessful%20Job%20Search%20Experience,%20Australia~Jul%202000~Latest~06/06/2001&&tabname=Past%20Future%20Issues&prodno=6245.0&issue=Jul%202000&num=&view=&\)\(6245.0\), 1982-2000.](#)
- [Australians' Employment and Unemployment Patterns \(https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/second+level+view?ReadForm&prodno=6286.0&viewtitle=Australians%27%20Employment%20and%20Unemployment%20Patterns1994%20to%201996~Latest~15/12/1997&&tabname=Past%20Future%20Issues&prodno=6286.0&issue=1994%20to%201996&num=&view=&\)\(6286.0\), 1994-1997.](#)
- [Occasional Paper: Labour Market Programs, Unemployment and Employment Hazards \(https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/ProductsbyCatalogue/F1AB3EB6E180B231CA2570AC001AC2BE?OpenDocument\) \(6239.0.00.002\), 1997.](#)
- [Focus on Families - A Statistical Series: Education and Employment \(https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/4421.01994?OpenDocument\)\(4421.0\), 1994.](#)
- [Australia's Long-Term Unemployed, A Statistical Profile \(https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/6255.01993?OpenDocument\)\(6255.0\), 1993.](#)



Previous catalogue number

This release previously used catalogue number 6239.0*.

* Note: Catalogue number 6239.0 was also previously used for [Information Paper - Review of ABS Employment Statistics \(https://archive.org/details/62390-1981\)](#), 1981.

Methodology

[Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation, Australia methodology, 2022-23 financial year](#)